

Message Text

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ICA-11 /091 W

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R 141047Z SEP 78

FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1831

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

USINT BAGHDAD POUCH

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT POUCH

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY DOHA

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY SANA

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 KUWAIT 5021

DEPT. ALSO FOR NEA/ARP

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ELAB, KU

SUBJECT: QUESTIONS ON PALESTINIAN POPULATION CONCENTRATIONS
LOCATED IN MIDDLE EAST COUNTRIES

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REF: (A) STATE 218639, (B) A-76 OF SEPTEMBER 12, 1974,
(C) A-68 OF SEPTEMBER 21, 1976.

1. FOLLOWING RESPONSES KEYED TO QUESTIONS POSED BY PARAGRAPHS
(A) THROUGH (K) CONTAINED IN REF A.

(A) ACCURATE STATISTICS ARE UNAVAILABLE FOR THE TOTAL NUMBERS OF PALESTINIANS IN KUWAIT, DUE TO LARGE NUMBERS OF PALESTINIANS WITH JORDANIAN, EGYPTIAN, SYRIAN OR LEBANESE DOCUMENTATION. DRAWING ON INFORMATION FROM THE MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR, A BRITISH EMBASSY REPORT ON THE PALESTINIANS, STATISTICS PUBLISHED BY THE CENTRAL STATISTICS OFFICE, AND PAST EMBASSY REPORTING, WE GIVE THE FOLLOWING "BEST GUESSES". THERE ARE BETWEEN 270 AND 320 THOUSAND PALESTINIANS IN KUWAIT OUT OF A TOTAL POPULATION NOW ESTIMATED AT 1.2 MILLION. NO STATISTICS ARE AVAILABLE FOR PALESTINIAN BIRTH RATE BUT THERE HAS BEEN A STEADY INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF PALESTINIANS AS A PERCENTAGE OF THE TOTAL POPULATION, FROM A 20 PERCENT FIGURE IN 1970 TO 25 PERCENT (EST.) TODAY. DURING THIS PERIOD THE TOTAL NON-KUWAITI POPULATION GROWTH IS ATTRIBUTABLE IN A SMALL WAY TO NATURAL INCREASE BY MOSTLY TO THE ARRIVAL OF MIGRANT WORKERS FOLLOWING THE OIL BOOM. THE PERCENTAGE OF WORKING AGE PALESTINIANS EMPLOYED IS EXTREMELY HIGH, APPROACHING 98 PERCENT EXCLUDING STUDENTS. THERE IS VIRTUALLY NO PALESTINIAN OR OTHER UNEMPLOYMENT IN KUWAIT DUE TO NEEDS OF ECONOMY FOR QUALIFIED WORKERS, GOK CONTROL OF WORK PERMITS, AND EXTREMELY HIGH COST OF LIVING.

GENERALLY SPEAKING THOSE WHO ARE NOT WORKING OR STUDYING CANNOT AFFORD, NOR ARE THEY ENCOURAGED, TO STAY.

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(B) PALESTINIANS ARE FOUND AT ALL LEVELS OF THE GOVERNMENT AND PRIVATE SECTOR EXCEPT IN THE MOST SENIOR POSITIONS. THEY ARE THE MANAGERS, DIRECTORS GENERAL, ACCOUNTANTS, CHIEF CLERKS, PERSONNEL MEN, FOREMEN, DRIVERS AND LABORERS. IN THESE POSITIONS THEY CAN ENSURE THAT OTHER PALESTINIANS ALWAYS HAVE JOBS. CONFIDENTIAL GOK FIGURES SHOW PALESTINIANS COMPRISE 38 PERCENT OF THE TOTAL WORK FORCE. THIS 38 PERCENT, HOWEVER, IS HEAVILY REPRESENTED IN KEY JOBS IN ALL SECTORS. KUWAITIS ARE THE DIRECTORS BUT THE PALESTINIANS PRHVIDE THE ADMINISTRATIVE MOTOR WITHOUT WHICH KUWAIT FOR ALL ITS WEALTH WOULD NOT RUN. NEARLY 20 PERCENT OF ALL GOVERNMENT CIVIL SERVANTS, OR ROUGHLY 25,000 EMPLOYEES, ARE PALESTINIAN, IN AN ECONOMY WHERE THE GOVERNMENT TO PRIVATE EMPLOYMENT RATIO IS ROUGHLY

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&50. 33 PERCENT OF ALL PALESTINIANS HAVE BEEN RESIDENTS LONGER THAN 10 YEARS AND 66 PERCENT LONGER THAN FIVE YEARS. AVERAGE INCOME IS ABOUT \$13,320 PER ANNUM FOR A FAMILY OF FOUR. AVERAGE AGE OF WORKERS IS MID TO LATE 30'S. SINCE COST OF LIVING IS VERY HIGT IN KUWAIT NEARLY 60-70 PERCENT OF EARNINGS GO TO CONSUMPTION. FIVE PERCENT OF

EARNINGS ARE WITHHELD BY EMPLOYERS AND TURNED OVER TO THE
PALESTINE LIBERATION ORGANIZATION. BULK OF THE REMAINING
IS OFTEN SPENT ON EDUCATION OF CHILDREN, OR REPATRIATED
TO JORDAN OR ELSEWHERE AS INVESTMENT.

(C) THERE ARE NO STRIKING POST 1973 EMPLOYMENT TRENDS.
LABOR PERMITS ISSUED TO PALESTINIANS ROSE SLIGHTLY IN 1974
BUT HAVE FALLEN AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL PERMITS ISSUED
IN RECENT YEARS. THIS IS ATTRIBUTABLE MORE TO THE MAJOR
INFLUX OF OTHER NATIONALITIES THAN TO A DECLINE IN NUMBERS
OF PALESTINIANS APPLYING FOR WORK PERMITS. "KUWAITIZATION",
THE FILLING OF JOBS WITH KUWAITIS, AFFECTS PALESTINIANS.
TRADITIONAL PALESTINIAN "SENIOR" JOBS ARE LOST TO "KUWAIT-
IZATION" AS IT MOVES FROM THE TOP JOBS DOWN TO OPERATIONAL
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LEVELS. THIS PROCESS IS GRADUAL AND AFFECTS THE QUALITY
BUT NOT THE QUANTITY OF EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY. THE
MIDDLE LEVEL POSITIONS LIKELY WILL BE HEAVILY PALESTINIAN
FOR SOME TIME TO COME; HOWEVER, THE CHILLING EFFECT OF
"KUWAITIZATION" ON THE PALESTINIAN PERCEPTION OF "OPPOR-
TUNITIES IN (72-85)" IS INCREASINGLY EVIDENT.

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(D) ALL EXPATRIATE WORKERS IN KUWAIT ARE THERE AT SUFFER-
ANCE OF GOK AUTHORITIES. ALL ARE SUBJECT TO CANCELLATION
OF THEIR WORK PERMITS. WITHOUT A WORK PERMIT EXPATRIATES
CANNOT LEGALLY WORK IN KUWAIT AND ARE SUBJECT TO DEPORTA-
TION. THERE ARE NO EXTRAORDINARY SOCIAL RESTRICTIONS
ON PALESTINIANS OTHER THAN A GENERAL LAYERING OF SOCIETY
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WITH KUWAITIS AT THE TOP, A LARGE GAP, THE PALESTINIANS,
OTHER ARABS, YEMENIS, AND PEOPLE FROM THE SUBCONTINENT
ON THE BOTTOM. RELATIVELY SPEAKING THE PALESTINIANS AS
A GROUP ARE ECONOMICALLY WELL OFF, COMPARED TO NON-WESTERN
NON-KUWAITIS, BUT THE SOCIAL CHASM BETWEEN KUWAITIS AND PALES-
TINIANS IS A SORE POINT AMONG THE LATTER. ANOTHER IS THAT
GOVERNMENT SALARY SCALES ARE HIGHER FOR KUWAITIS THAN FOR
OTHERS HOLDING COMPARABLE POSITIONS. THE LEGAL STATUS
OF CHILDREN BORN IN KUWAIT DERIVES FROM THE LEGAL
STATUS OF THE FATHER. TO ACQUIRE KUWAITI NATIONALITY ONE
MUST HAVE A KUWAITI FATHER. EXCEPT IN SPECIAL CASES PER-
SONS OF PALESTINIAN ORIGIN AND THEIR FAMILIES HAVE NOT
RECEIVED KUWAITI CITIZENSHIP. EVEN IN THOSE RARE CASES,
AMOUNTING TO A HANDFUL A YEAR, CITIZENSHIP CONFERRED BY
GOK IS "UNDERSTOOD" TO BE SECOND CLASS. RECIPIENT MAY NOT
HOLD HIGH OFFICE ALTHOUGH HE MAY OWN LAND AND ENGAGE IN
BUSINESS WITHOUT A KUWAITI SPONSOR. HE MAY NOT VOTE FOR
CANDIDATES FOR THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY UNLESS HE HAS BEEN
NATURALIZED TWENTY YEARS.

(E) ANSWERED IN PART BY (D). AS PART OF THE GENERAL
MATURATION OF KUWAITI DEVELOPMENT, AND GOK POLICY OF
"KUWAITIZATION", THE PERCENTAGE OF "SENIOR" JOBS HELD
BY PALESTINIANS IS LIKELY TO DECLINE. HOWEVER PALESTIN-
IANS WHO ARE WILLING TO TAKE JOBS AT THE MARGIN OF "KUWAIT-
IZATION" FIND INCREASED OPPORTUNITIES AS THE ECONOMY
EXPANDS. KUWAITIS ARE NEITHER INCLINED NOR NUMEROUS

ENOUGH TO TAKE JOBS DOWN TO THE FOREMAN OR FIELD SUPERVISOR LEVEL. WE EXPECT A GRADUAL, SMOOTH PROCESS OF "KUWAITIZATION" BOTH IN THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR. WHILE PALESTINIANS WHO COULD HERETOFORE ASPIRE TO GENERAL MANAGERS' JOBS WILL MORE AND MORE OFTEN BUMP INTO THE "RESERVED FOR KUWAITIS" SIGN, THERE WILL BE OTHER, CONFIDENTIAL

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IF LESS PRESTIGIOUS, POSITIONS FOR THEM TO OCCUPY.

(F) KUWAITIS VIEW PALESTINIANS WITH SOME CONCERN GIVEN THEIR LARGE NUMBERS AND THEIR PRESUMED POLITICS, BUT WE DO NOT THINK THERE IS MUCH RESENTMENT THAT PALESTINIANS HOLD IMPORTANT JOBS. THE GOK POLICY OF "KUWAITIZATION", AND CLEARLY DEFINED STRATIFICATION OF KUWAITI SOCIETY, OBTAIN SUCH RESENTMENT. PALESTINIANS, FOR THEIR PART, KEENLY RESENT FACT THAT GOK RESERVES BEST JOBS FOR KUWAITIS, AND MANY LONG-TERM RESIDENT PALESTINIANS FEEL THEIR SERVICE TO KUWAIT IS UNREQUITED.

(G) PALESTINIAN YOUTH MAY ATTEND GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS IF THEY REGISTER BEFORE THE AGE OF SEVEN. THOSE SEEKING TO ENTER AFTER AGE SEVEN MUST EITHER RESORT TO "INFLUENCE" (NOT AN UNCOMMON PRACTICE) OR ATTEND A PRIVATE SCHOOL. STATE SCHOLARSHIPS ARE RESERVED FOR KUWAITIS. KUWAIT UNIVERSITY ACCEPTS NON-KUWAITIS ON A QUOTA BASIS BUT THERE IS NO SPECIAL PREFERENCE GIVEN TO RESIDENT PALESTINIANS OTHER THAN 30 PLACES RESERVED FOR PLO DESIGNEES. LARGE NUMBERS OF PALESTINIAN YOUTH ATTEND SCHOOL ABROAD PRINCIPALLY AT THE UNIVERSITY LEVEL. FIRST CHOICE FOR UNIVERSITY EDUCATION SEEMS TO BE THE U.S. FOLLOWED BY U.K., EGYPT AND LEBANON. SINCE PARENTS OF MANY SCHOOL AGE PALESTINIANS ARE WELL EDUCATED THEMSELVES BUT PESSIMISTIC ABOUT OBTAINING KUWAITI NATIONALITY AND REMAINING IN KUWAIT AFTER RETIRING, THEY INVEST HEAVILY IN THEIR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION.

(H) KUWAIT'S POLICY VIS-A-VIS THE PALESTINIAN PRESENCE GENERALLY HAS BEEN "OPEN DOOR". ANY MALE PALESTINIAN 18 YEARS OF AGE OR OVER WHO HAS VALID EMPLOYMENT CAN COME TO AND RESIDE IN KUWAIT, AND BRING HIS FAMILY. WHEN THE SON OF A RESIDENT PALESTINIAN REACHES AGE 18, HE MUST GET A JOB OR LEAVE UNLESS HE IS A BONA FIDE STUDENT. THE PALESTINIAN COMMUNITY USUALLY CAN LOCATE JOBS FOR SUCH CONFIDENTIAL

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BOYS BY VIRTUE OF ITS INFLUENCE AS OUTLINED ABOVE. GOK
FORESEES A LABOR SHORTAGE FOR THE NEXT 5-7 YEARS, AT LEAST.
PARTICULARLY IN THE SERVICE SECTOR AND IN DIRECT FIELD
SUPERVISORY ROLES (AREAS IN WHICH KUWAITIS DISDAIN TO

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 3 OF 3 KUWAIT 5021

WORK), THE SHORGAGE MAY BE ACUTE. PALESTINIANS HAVE
TRADITIONALLY FILLED THESE JOBS. WHILE "KUWAITIZATION"
WILL DISPLACE SOME PALESTINIANS FROM MORE SENIOR
POSITIONS, MOSTLY THROUGH RETIREMENT, THE EXPANSION OF
JOBS IN THESE SECTORS WILL LIKELY COUNTERBALANCE OR
EXCEED ANY REDUCTION. THUS, THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE
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EMPLOYMENT OF PALESTINIANS WILL LIKELY REMAIN THE SAME OR INCREASE.

(I) PRINCIPAL INCENTIVES FOR PALESTINIANS TO WORK IN KUWAIT ARE IN ORDER OF IMPORTANCE, HIGH WAGES, RELATIVE OPENNESS OF THE ECONOMY, LARGE NUMBERS OF PALESTINIANS MAKING FOR SENSE OF COMMUNITY, AND RELATIVE SECURITY. PRINCIPAL DISINCENTIVES ARE SOCIAL AND LEGAL DISCRIMINATION PRACTICED AGAINST ALL NON-KUWAITIS, HIGH COST OF LIVING, FRUSTRATION WITH "KUWAITIZATION" AND LITTLE LIKELIHOOD OF ACQUIRING NATIONALITY. FOR PRACTICAL PURPOSES, NON-KUWAITIS EXCEPT SAUDIS MAY NOT OWN LAND IN KUWAIT, AND THUS PALESTINIANS LIKE OTHER EXPATRIATES RARELY PERCEIVE THEMSELVES AS OTHER THAN TRANSIENTS.

(J) NOT APPLICABLE GENERALLY AS THERE ARE NO CAMPS. PALESTINIANS TEND TO CLUSTER TOGETHER IN NEIGHBORHOODS OF THEIR OWN CHOOSING. FYI SOME NEIGHBORHOODS ARE RESERVED EXCLUSIVELY FOR KUWAITIS.

(K) CITIZENSHIP REQUIREMENTS ARE MAJOR BARRIER TO ASSIMILATION OF PALESTINIANS IN KUWAIT. THEY ARE WELCOME TO COME, TO STAY AND LABOR IN KUWAIT AS LONG AS THEY ENGAGE IN NO ANTI-GOVERNMENT ACTIVITY. WHEN THEY STOP WORKING, WORK PERMIT REGULATIONS, HIGH COST OF LIVING AND DIFFICULTY OF OWNING LAND WORK AGAINST ANY PALESTINIANS SEEKING TO REMAIN. A NEW CITIZENSHIP LAW IS NOT LIKELY FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE BECAUSE THE CONFERRING OF KUWAITI CITIZENSHIP ON LARGE NUMBERS OF PALESTINIANS WOULD FUNDAMENTALLY CHANGE THE KUWAITI OLIGARCHY.
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